Planning for Action

Equity in Education: An Implementation Handbook for

Our Children, Our Communities AND Our Future

March 2001

GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE
of Metis Studies and Applied Research

Saskatchewan Education

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This handbook is a companion implementation guide to the policy framework ***Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: Equity in Education***. In facilitating discussions, delivering workshops and engaging in the planning activities outlined in this guide, you will want to draw on the policy framework for further detail.

To obtain a copy of ***Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: Equity in Education*** go to Saskatchewan Education's website www.sasked.gov.sk.ca or contact:

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Working together, and with your assistance, the organizations responsible for creating the Equity in Education policy framework (College of Education – University of Saskatchewan; Faculty of Education – University of Regina; Gabriel Dumont Institute; League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; Saskatchewan Education; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission; Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; and Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) can achieve the vision and goals outlined in the policy framework.

Acknowledgements

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I. Introduction: Making a Difference

With the release of the policy framework, *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: Equity in Education (1997)*, the education community in Saskatchewan unified and strengthened its commitment to equity. *Equity in Education: Planning for Action* is the companion implementation guide for that policy document. It provides ideas and suggestions for working within your classroom, school, or school division to discuss, plan and take concrete actions toward ensuring that each person has equitable opportunity and benefit within Saskatchewan's education system.

What is equity in education? Why should I get involved?

The principle of equity is fundamental to public education in Saskatchewan. We have a proud record of achievement in fostering equitable opportunities and benefits for all. However, there is still much to be done. Real change toward equity can only be achieved by a *process* that engages each person in *reflection* and *action*. This handbook provides supports for an approach to change that focuses on the personal and organizational levels. The activities encourage thoughtful reflection and dialogue among students, educators, administrators, trustees and parents. The activities also facilitate consideration of personal values and attitudes as well as the strengthening of professional practices. The focus is on strengths rather than on problems and on the promotion of individual and local responsibility for the creation of a culture within our schools that is fair and just for all.

Yes, I believe in equity for every person, but what can I do to make a difference?

What can we do in our classrooms, schools and divisions to work towards achieving equity?

How will we know when our efforts are affecting real change?

You are invited to use and modify suggestions in this guide to suit the needs of your individual school or division. Whether you are beginning discussions, renewing your commitment, refining your work plan, or evaluating the effectiveness of your actions to date, this handbook will help you **make a difference.**

If these are questions that you have been asking, this handbook will help.

Background for Facilitators

Every classroom, school and school division has unique needs when planning for equity, depending on where people are in their understanding and commitment and on what they have done to date. Education leaders – teachers, administrators and trustees – who will be leading discussions, workshops and planning sessions are invited to use and modify the activities in this handbook to meet the needs of their audience.

Organization of this Handbook

Throughout this handbook shaded boxes or introductory sections provide additional information for group leaders on both the content and the process. You may wish to use this information in your remarks to the group when introducing a workshop or activity.

The activities in this handbook are organized into three sections:

1. **Understanding Equity** – This section provides two activities with appropriate reference material to conduct discussion groups. The purpose of the activities is to stimulate dialogue and reflection around **what** equity means – definition, scope and principles – and **why** we need to strengthen our efforts to achieve equity.

2. **Personal Reflection – Where Do I Stand?** – This section provides opportunities for personal reflection and assessment of our own attitudes, concerns and commitment to equity issues. It also provides activities that help each person develop an individual commitment to equity.

3. **Creating an Equitable Environment – Making Change** – This section provides tools for groups and organizations to assess their own progress toward equity, to identify problem areas and to plan strategies for change.

An additional section, *Assessing Progress – How Will We Know When We Have Achieved Our Objectives?*, has been included for groups wishing to assess how well their equity plan is working.

Using the Activities in this Handbook

This handbook contains 19 different activities. These activities can be combined in many ways to create a variety of different workshops. The activities chosen for any particular workshop will depend on the purpose of the workshop, the time available and the personalities and knowledge of workshop participants. Four sample workshop agendas are given below.

Two-Hour to Three-Hour Awareness Workshop

This workshop focuses on awareness – helping people understand what equity is and encouraging them to examine their own attitudes.

What is Equity?

- Use Activity 1 – What is Equity in Education? (Page 8)
- If time permits, add Activity 2 – Why Do We Need to Be Concerned? (Page 10)

Personal Reflection

Use two of:

- Activity 3 – Self-Awareness of Equity: My Thoughts and Concerns (Page 15)
- Activity 4 – What Does Equity Mean to Me? (Page 17)
- Activity 5 – Exploring Assumptions that Affect Attitudes (Page 18)

Understanding Stereotypes

Use one of:

- Activity 6 – Exploring Common Stereotypes (Page 21)
- Activity 7 – Understanding Privilege in Daily Life (Page 22)

One-Hour to Two-Hour Workshop on What We as Individuals Can Do

This short workshop is designed to illustrate that the actions of individuals can make a difference and to encourage participants to make a personal commitment to action.

Use one or two of:

- Activity 8 – Making a Personal Commitment and Becoming Involved – Part a (Page 24)
- Activity 8 – Making a Personal Commitment and Becoming Involved – Part b (Page 25)
- Activity 9 – Helping Students Make a Commitment (Page 27)

Half-Day Workshop on Action Planning for Our School

This workshop is best done by a school staff working in groups. Its purpose is to develop an action plan for change in a particular school.

Doing a Needs Assessment

Use Activity 10 – Modelling Equity (Page 30)
Plus one of:

- Activity 11 – Where Are We? (Page 31)
- Activity 12 – Discrimination in Our Schools? Let's Consider (Page 33)
- Activity 13 – Equity Needs Assessment (Page 34)

Complete with Activity 14 – Where Do We Need to Go? (Page 36)

Planning for Change

Use one of:

- Activity 16 – Understanding Change (Page 42)
- Activity 17 – Becoming Agents of Change (Page 44)

Complete with Activity 18 – Getting Others On Board (Page 47)

Assessing Progress

- Use Activity 19 – Possible Equity Indicators (Page 51)

One-Day Comprehensive Workshop

This comprehensive workshop covers all aspects of equity, beginning with awareness, through to planning and assessment.

What is Equity?

Use one of:

- Activity 1 – What is Equity in Education? (Page 8)
- Activity 2 – Why Do We Need to Be Concerned? (Page 10)

Personal Reflection

Use one of:

- Activity 3 – Self-Awareness of Equity: My Thoughts and Concerns (Page 15)
- Activity 4 – What Does Equity Mean to Me? (Page 17)
- Activity 5 – Exploring Assumptions that Affect Attitudes (Page 18)

Understanding Stereotypes

Use one of:

- Activity 6 – Exploring Common Stereotypes (Page 21)
- Activity 7 – Understanding Privilege in Daily Life (Page 22)

Making a Personal Commitment

Use one of:

- Activity 8 – Making a Personal Commitment and Becoming Involved – Part a (Page 24)
- Activity 8 – Making a Personal Commitment and Becoming Involved – Part b (Page 25)
- Activity 9 – Helping Students Make a Commitment (Page 27)

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- Activity 17 – Becoming Agents of Change (Page 44)

Complete with Activity 18 – Getting Others On Board (Page 47)

Assessing Progress

Activity 19 – Possible Equity Indicators (Page 51)

Professional and Organizational Development

Understandings of effective professional development principles and organizational development processes continue to evolve. Adult learners have varied learning styles, are at various career stages and as a result, have varied needs. Adult learning and professional development then, are generally most effective when the learners themselves are responsible for their own personal and professional growth. This recognizes that adults are autonomous and responsible as decision makers, problem solvers, researchers, learners and reflective practitioners.

Participant Involvement

The capacity building and policy development processes suggested in this handbook reflect the belief that all individuals, whatever their role as teacher, trustee, student, administrator, parent or community member, need to work together to nurture equitable environments. Each person regardless of their role in the organization has a valid and important contribution to make and their voice must be included.

II. Activities for Reflection and Planning

A. *Understanding Equity*

Information for Facilitators

This first section provides discussion questions that you may use to stimulate dialogue and reflection and create strengthened or shared understanding of what equity means. The questions reflect common queries and misunderstandings people express when exploring the subject of equity. Factual information is included with each question to guide the dialogue and to provide accurate background information.

Objectives

The objectives of this section are to:

- introduce a group to the policy framework *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: Equity in Education* that is shared by all the partners in education in the province and is the foundation for all implementation activities. The policy framework articulates a vision, objectives, principles and a definition of equity;

- facilitate dialogue and reflection about what equity in education means so that all educators and administrators have a shared understanding of what is being pursued;

- facilitate dialogue and reflection on why equity is important to individuals, our schools, communities and the future prosperity of the province; and,

- lay the foundation for strengthened personal and organizational commitment to equity.

Activity 1 – What is Equity in Education?

Discussion Questions (and Reference Material*)

1. What is equity in education?

A useful approach in coming to understand what equity means in education is to ask the question, **What is fair**? All students and adults, regardless of their colour, gender, national origin, age, social or economic status, sexual orientation, family structure and lifestyle, religious preference or exceptionality, have the opportunity to participate fully in society and experience success.

2. If you treat people the *same*, are you treating them equitably?

Equitable treatment does not mean the **same** treatment. The concept of equity goes beyond providing equal opportunity where everyone is treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where individuals **benefit** equally. This recognizes that some people require additional and specialized supports in order to achieve equal benefit.

3. Can you define equity in education?

Equity in education is the fair and equitable treatment of all members of our society, all of whom are entitled to participate in and enjoy the benefits of an education. All students and adults have the opportunity to participate fully and to experience success and human dignity while developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society.

*Responses to these discussion questions were taken from the policy framework ***Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: Equity in Education.***

4. What are some of the principles to guide actions toward equity in education?

Guiding principles for equity in education include:

- respect for each individual;
- cooperation and empowerment;
- respect for diversity;
- shared responsibility and mutual benefit;
- educational excellence;
- comprehensive, holistic approaches; and,
- accountability.

5. What does equity in education include? What is the scope?

Equity in education ensures equitable access, opportunity and benefit for all people in the education system recognizing that to be treated equitably some people may need more or different supports. It includes:

- hiring and professional development;
- curriculum and instruction materials and practices as well as learning environments that foster and model equity;
- assessment and evaluation materials and practices;
- cross-cultural, inter-cultural, non-racist, non-sexist, non-discriminatory education and professional development opportunities;
- school culture, climate and environment;
- student development;
- leadership development; and,
- organizational development and change.

6. What is the difference between equity and equality?

Equity – Fairness and justice for all.

Equality – Equal freedom from discrimination.

Activity 2 – Why Do We Need to Be Concerned?

1. Why is equity so important in education? Why should I get involved?

There are a number of compelling reasons for us to increase our efforts to achieve equity. First, consider the statistical information below.

The Real Global Village

- If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of 100 people, with the relative size of human groups remaining the same, there would be:
  - 57 Asians
  - 21 Europeans
  - 14 people from the Americas
  - 8 Africans
- Fifty-two people would be women; forty-eight, men.
- Seventy people would be non-white and 30 white. Seventy would be non-Christian and 30 Christian.
- Fifty percent of the world's wealth would be in the hands of six men.
- Seventy people would be unable to read.
- Fifty would suffer from malnutrition and eighty would live in sub-standard housing.
- Ten would be gay or lesbian.
- Only one would have a college education.

- Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (Gay and lesbian statistics from Gay and Lesbian Health Services, Saskatoon)

Facts About Existing Inequities

Gender Inequities

- In 1996 in Saskatchewan, 83.8% of single-parent families were headed by women (Statistics Canada, 1996).
- In 1997, 18.3% of Canadian women lived in poverty compared to 14.3% of men (National Council of Welfare, 1999).
- In 1997-98 in Canada, women accounted for 88% of reported victims of spousal violence (Statistics Canada, 1999, June 11).

Economic Inequities

- In 1997, 18.6% of Saskatchewan children lived in poverty. The comparable percentage for Canada as a whole was 19.6%. In the same year, 65.6% of Saskatchewan children in single-parent families headed by mothers were poor, compared to a national percentage of 60.4% (National Council of Welfare, 1999).
- In 1997, 11.4% of all live births in Saskatchewan were to mothers under the age of 20. The comparable percentage for Canada as a whole was 5.7%. In 1997, Saskatchewan had the second highest teen pregnancy rate in Canada (after the Northwest Territories) (Statistics Canada, 1999, June 16).

Racial Inequities

- In 1996, 35% of Aboriginal adults in Saskatchewan had a college, trades or university education compared to 47% of non-Aboriginal Saskatchewan adults (Statistics Canada, 2000).
- In 1996, the unemployment rate among Aboriginal adults in Saskatchewan was 26%; it was 5.9% among non-Aboriginal Saskatchewan adults (Statistics Canada, 2000).

Health Inequities

- About 16% of Canadians aged 12 and older report a disability or handicap due to a health problem (Statistics Canada, 1999).
- Of those 16%, 10% were limited in home activities, 3% of students were limited in school activities and 6% of working persons were limited on the job (Statistics Canada, 1999).

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Other reasons include:

- **The Goals of Education in Saskatchewan** – These Goals recognize the inherent worth and value of each individual. They state that *education should develop the potential of each person to the fullest extent.*

  The public education system in Saskatchewan is committed to preparing tomorrow's adults by meeting the diverse needs of all students.

- **Teaching and Learning** – Core Curriculum reflects the understanding that effective teaching is a transaction between the teacher and the learner rather than simply the transmission of knowledge and information. The interactions between the learner and his or her environment and the teacher are critical to the success of the learning endeavour. Thus understanding and mitigating, where necessary, the learner's experiences and context are essential.

- **Value of Each Person** – The unique potential and capabilities of each child, young person and adult regardless of ethnic background, gender, ability or other difference are valuable and worthy of respect and nurturing. Diverse opinions, ideas and experience broaden and enrich our collective understanding and capacity to solve problems and address complex issues.

- **Demographic Trends** – Some of the main trends are:
  - increasing child poverty rates;
  - rapidly growing, young Aboriginal population;
  - growing number of students with exceptional needs; and,
  - rural to urban population shift.

Children who fit in these groups or are affected by these social dynamics may require additional and specialized supports in order to succeed in school.

- **Gender** – Providing a gender-equitable environment continues to be a challenge for schools. A gender-equitable environment is one that provides equality of opportunity and ensures equality of results for all students based on individual aptitudes, abilities and interests, regardless of gender.

- **Social Justice** – Public education is the institution in society that builds understanding and community among diverse groups and individuals with varied interests. It is the forum where individuals learn to become community and global citizens.

2. Why is achieving equity important for Saskatchewan and our prosperity?

The public education system in Saskatchewan is committed to meeting the diverse needs of all students. Equity is about turning diversity into benefits and advantages for all. This is critical because where inequity prevails, our communities are denied the wealth of understanding, new ideas and energy that each individual and group can contribute to the well-being of the whole society.

3. What challenges have you been facing in your classroom, school or division that make equity in education important?

Write your thoughts here:

B. Personal Reflection – Where Do I Stand?

Information for Facilitators

Ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for every person in Saskatchewan's education system requires the commitment and energy of each person at both the organizational level (school, division and provincial) and at the personal level. For equity to become a reality, each one of us needs to examine our personal values and attitudes and reflect upon our commitment and actions.

Achieving equity depends on our ability to challenge our mental models, assumptions and existing practices. This section provides activities to explore and reflect upon individual beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes and practices. Activities are provided to foster personal and group reflection and generate strengthened commitment and action. Change begins when each one of us recognizes the need and commits to take action. Organizations and institutions change because their people have changed.

Objectives

The objectives of this section are to:

- increase self-awareness of equity perspectives and issues;
- surface and discuss concerns about equity in a non-threatening, constructive context, including exploring assumptions that affect attitudes and behaviours;
- increase understanding of what equity means to individuals and within the public education system;
- explore and clarify common stereotypes;
- foster the strengthened personal commitment of participants; and,
- facilitate development of concrete plans to take action.

Activity 3 – Self-Awareness of Equity: My Thoughts and Concerns

The following statements will help you reflect upon and analyze your own response and sensitivity to diversity. For each question below, respond by filling in a *yes*, *no* or *sometimes* on the adjacent line.

_____ Do I recognize biases in myself and try to overcome them?

_____ Do I detect elements of discrimination in classroom materials and the media?

_____ Do I see many similarities between myself and my students or co-workers who are different from me?

_____ Do I support and participate in parent and community activities or initiatives that challenge discrimination?

_____ Do I believe there is a beneficial aspect to hiring Aboriginal teachers? Teachers of other ethno-cultural backgrounds? Teachers with disabilities? Balanced numbers of females and males for administrative positions?

_____ Do I believe there is a negative aspect to recruiting people from those groups?

_____ Do I believe that many students (Aboriginal, female, visible minority, gay/lesbian, disabled) experience discrimination (subtle or overt)?

_____ Do I have the impression that the situation is improving for children and others for whom equity is an issue?

_____ Am I comfortable working with people who are different from me?

_____ Does the behaviour of people from different backgrounds sometimes confuse me?

_____ Do I know about my own cultural background and how it influences my beliefs and behaviour?

_____ Am I able to resolve conflicts with co-workers or students who are different from me in cultural background, gender, or lifestyle?

_____ Is my behaviour towards other people influenced by their differences?

_____ Does prejudice exist in every individual?

_____ Are stereotypes commonly held about every group?

_____ Do I understand the cultural differences of my co-workers and students?

_____ Am I fearful of offending people who are different from me by saying or doing the wrong thing?

_____ Do I sometimes find myself thinking, "Why don't they act like us?"

_____ Are people who are discriminated against treated differently because they act differently?

Points for Reflection and Discussion

Do I / we need to change? How?

Have I ever unintentionally hurt another person who is different? Why?

(Adapted from the Saskatchewan Committee for the Elimination of Racism in Sport and Recreation, 1995.)

Activity 4 – What Does Equity Mean to Me?

Explore what equity means and share your thoughts with another participant.

In point form, list four or five descriptive sentences to illustrate what **equity (in general)** means to you.

Complete the following sentences:

My understanding of what **equity in education** means is ...?

My attitude toward **equity in education** is ...?

Activity 5 – Exploring Assumptions that Affect Attitudes

We sometimes unknowingly make statements about disadvantaged groups that carry built-in assumptions that are not necessarily true. These assumptions tend to perpetuate stereotypes. For each of the following statements, adapted from the Toronto Board of Education's *Resources for Anti-Racist Education* (1996), uncover the assumption(s) that lie behind them.

Example:

"If they keep letting these people in, there won't be any jobs for real Canadians!"

Assumptions:

- *"Real Canadians" aren't immigrants*. In fact, with the exception of First Nations peoples, we are all immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.
- *Immigrants take jobs*. In fact, immigration stimulates the economy and provides more jobs.

"Everybody gets called names. It doesn't matter who you are. Don't take it so seriously!"

Assumptions:

"It's just natural not to like what is different. There have always been these problems and there always will be!"

Assumptions:

"Sure she is good at her job, but a promotion would get in the way of her family life!"

Assumptions:

Discussing common assumptions made about certain groups makes it clear that our thinking may not be accurate or rational. Faulty or misinformed reasoning can lead to misunderstanding, fear and avoidance of others and, if left unchecked, can result in discrimination, hatred and even violence. Becoming aware of our own prejudices is a significant first step towards counteracting them.

Overcoming prejudice is hard work. It takes patience, time and discipline to seek out factual information and to listen quietly with an open mind and an open heart. Racism, sexism, and classism are inadvertently perpetuated when we refuse to acknowledge how we contribute to them.

We all have a choice about how to handle our own fears of differences that create inequities. We can suspend judgement of each other, talk and listen to each other and use rational thinking to assess our prejudices towards each other. We can adhere to principles of fairness, social justice, cultural appropriateness and equality to assess our behaviours and attitudes.

"It's just natural not to like what is different. There have always been these problems and there always will be!"

Assumptions:

"Sure she is good at her job, but a promotion would get in the way of her family life!"

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Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions will help you focus your perspective on building equitable bridges in your classroom, school or division.

1. In order to have a strong sense of community in our schools, how can we break down barriers that isolate us from one another and whenever possible, support and stand up for the rights of others to be different and unique?

2. It is important to have a diverse group of friends or associates in order to experience diversity. What can we do in our school to increase the interactions among diverse groups and, therefore, increase our understanding of those who are different from us?

3. It is important to realize that everything we do can make a "difference". How can we take a stand to support our point of view in a way that does not diminish the views of someone else?

Activity 6 – Exploring Common Stereotypes

Stereotyping occurs when we oversimplify or generalize about a group or an individual without taking into account their uniqueness and individual differences. Because it is based on assumptions, stereotyping is unfair and often hurtful to people.

There are stereotypes (positive and negative) about virtually every group of people. For example:

- All Scottish people are frugal.
- All Irish people have red hair.
- All single moms are poor.
- All Asian people are ambitious and hardworking.
- All old people are wise.
- All teenagers are impulsive.

Positive stereotyping can be as hurtful as negative because it means we have preconceived ideas and assumptions about people and treat them in ways that reflect these preconceived ideas.

Write down one negative and one positive stereotype that might apply to you or someone you know because of age, appearance, gender, ethnic or cultural group, sexual orientation, marital status, etc. Then identify the extent to which you believe each of these stereotypes to be true.

Stereotype – a false or generalized conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based upon misconceptions and false generalizations about racial, age, ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographical, or national groups; social, marital, or family status; physical, developmental, or mental attributes; or gender (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993).

Positive Stereotype	**Negative Stereotype**
Extent to which this stereotype is true for me.	**Extent to which this stereotype is true for me.**

Activity 7 – Understanding Privilege in Daily Life

Discrimination – the unequal treatment of non-dominant groups or individuals, either by a person, or a group, or an institution with dominant identity. Through the denial of certain rights, discrimination results in inequality, subordination and/or deprivation of political, educational, social, economic and cultural rights (Minors, A., Mukherjee, A., & Posen, G., 1995).

If we are third or fourth generation Canadians of the majority, we may not always understand stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination at a personal level. This may be particularly the case for males. The following exercise may help us understand some of the daily life experiences of others. Work in small groups and respond to the situations described below.

1. You are a African-Canadian grade 3 student. No one else in the school (students, teachers or support staff) have skin colour or facial features like yours. How do you feel? How do you behave when you interact with the other students?

2. You are an Aboriginal person. You watch a videotape documentary about western Canada during the late 1800s. The documentary contains many references to "the brave pioneers who tamed the west and brought civilization to this new land." How do you feel?

Prejudice – a set of opinions about or attitudes toward a certain group, or individuals within it, that casts that group and its members in an inferior light and for which there is no legitimate basis in fact. The term is derived from the word prejudge. Prejudicial attitudes are difficult to change because concrete evidence that contradicts the prejudiced view tends to be dismissed as the exception to the rule (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993).

3. You are an Aboriginal parent. When you come to school to meet your children's teachers, none of them are of Aboriginal ancestry and none respond appropriately to your demonstration of politeness. How do you feel? What do you do?

4. You are a gay/lesbian teenager, trying, as most teenagers do, to integrate your sexuality into your life. When you watch television sitcoms you see only heterosexual romances. How do you feel?

5. You are a female grade 8 student. The middle years students are moving to a new building and are responsible for moving the contents of their classrooms. The teacher asks you and the other girls to pack the books, science equipment and supplies in boxes; the boys are asked to move these boxes and the desks to the new building. How do you feel? What do you do?

6. You are an Aboriginal teacher. The textbook that you are expected to use to teach social studies provides an overview of western civilization and makes no reference whatsoever to Aboriginal people or Aboriginal history, culture and traditions. How do you feel? What do you do?

7. You are a female grade 4 student. The teacher assigns you to work on a computer project with a male student. Your male classmate sits down at the keyboard and types. You look over his shoulder. How do you feel? What do you do?

8. You are a teacher who uses a wheelchair. The school division is holding an inservice in the town hall in the next community. When you get there you discover that the main entrance to the town hall has a porch with three steep steps. How do you feel? What do you do?

9. You are a university student majoring in math education. You get a high mark in a calculus class and the professor tells you that you are "a credit to your gender." How do you feel? What do you do?

10. You are an Aboriginal person. You go to a big department store and browse through several different departments. A person who appears to be a store employee hovers around and keeps you in sight most of the time. How do you feel? What do you do?

11. You use a wheelchair. When you skim through catalogues published by major retailers, you don't see any people who have physical disabilities. How do you feel? What do you do?

12. You are a male kindergarten teacher, with an academic specialization in early childhood education. A parent tells you that it isn't appropriate for a man to be teaching kindergarten and that she is going to ask the principal to move her child to another class. How do you feel? What do you do?

13. You are a child. You go to the service counter of a store to pay for a purchase. The clerk ignores you and continues to serve adults. How do you feel? What do you do?

14. You are a student with a hearing disability. You register for music class, but the music teacher throws your registration in the garbage and tells you that she wants to give the space to someone who will benefit from the class. How do you feel? What do you do?

Activity 8 – Making a Personal Commitment and Becoming Involved

- *How do I want to be treated?*
- *What do I want for my children and the children of this province, this country, the world?*
- *What is my role? What can I do?*

a. Group Problem Solving

When you look at your classroom, your school or your school division, you may see inequities. We can do a lot, as individuals and as groups, to change things that are unfair and to make our schools better places.

1. In small groups, identify an inequitable situation that you would like to change. Some possibilities include:

   - groups of students who poke fun at certain cultural/ethnic groups, gays/lesbians, people with disabilities, etc.;
   - a fellow teacher who brags about giving Aboriginal students a rough time;
   - steps at the entrance to the school or within the school that make the school inaccessible to people who use crutches or wheelchairs;
   - students who refuse to work with other students who are different in some way; and/or,
   - a sports coach who refuses to let girls participate in certain sports.

2. Discuss options for dealing with the situation. During the discussion you might consider points such as:

   - Is there a role for reason, logic, explanation, asking people to put themselves in others' shoes?
   - Can you change the physical environment, such as the structure of the playground or the way the classroom is set up?
   - Can you change the social environment, e.g., change student groupings, stagger recess times?
   - Is there a place for authoritarianism (e.g., Do this because I am the principal and I say so)?

- Do you need to consider the cultural and social environment in the school, including such things as teachers' attitudes, the extent to which the perceptions of other cultures/groups are reflected in the curriculum and in art and music?
- Is it appropriate to refer to legislation and policy, such as the school's equity policy or human rights legislation?
- When is it appropriate to involve parents? How should they be involved?

3. Develop a plan for dealing with this situation. In your plan identify:

   - specific actions that each person in the group can take;
   - indicators that will tell you whether the situation is improving; and,
   - a timeline that gives both short- and long-term objectives for improvement.

b. What is My Role? What Can I Do?

Listed below are some examples of activities that you could personally get involved in to make a change. Check off the ones that are *realistically possible* given your role in the organization. Try to stretch yourself beyond the involvement you have traditionally undertaken regarding equity in your school or school division.

____ Establish a positive learning environment that honours the human rights of all your students.

____ Search for ways to overcome your reluctance to get involved and to overcome the reluctance of your students to discuss questions of discrimination.

____ Help students recognize or detect overt and more subtle manifestations of discrimination in the curriculum and the community.

____ Develop in students a sense of social responsibility for facing and overcoming discrimination in all of its forms.

____ Confront statements that are racist, sexist, homophobic and otherwise discriminatory made by students or colleagues.

____ Help to develop an equity policy.

____ Take a stand against a discriminatory act.

To work toward achieving equity I need to...

... keep doing these things:

... do less of these things:

... do more of these things:

(Adapted from Saskatchewan Education, n.d.)

Activity 9 – Helping Students Make a Commitment

Give each student a copy of *Appendix 1 – Cultural Bridges Project*.

As a class, discuss the purpose of engaging in a Cultural Bridges Project and review some examples from Appendix 1.

Break the class into groups of about four students.

Assign one student in each group to be a recorder.

Ask each group to read and discuss some Cultural Bridges Projects from Appendix 1 that interest the group members. They can also suggest other projects that would be appropriate.

Ask each group to select one or two Cultural Bridges Projects to work on. Students can select from the list of Cultural Bridges Projects or create their own to enhance equity in the classroom, school or community. Group members may work on a project in pairs or alone. Have a recorder take notes of the group discussion.

Have each group recorder give the class a summary of his/her group's discussion, including the Cultural Bridges Projects selected by the group, the reasons why particular projects were selected and which group members will be working on each project.

Have students develop a written contract for themselves and those with whom they will be working. The contract should specify the title of the project they are working on, give a description of what is to be done, outline objective(s), have a start date or time and completion date, and include signatures (including a witness).

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C. *Creating an Equitable Environment – Making Change*

Information for Facilitators

There are a number of strategies in the effective schools literature that are applicable to the task of creating an equitable environment, where fairness and respect are modelled and reflected throughout the culture, climate, systems and programs of the school.

"Effective" organizations are characterized by:

- a spirit of trust and mutual respect;
- a common understanding about organizational values;
- shared purposes and goals; and,
- an ongoing search among the participants for new and better ways of working with and relating to each other.

Similarly, developing "learning communities" is another strategy used to achieve effectiveness in schools. Learning communities are generally considered to be organizations that can identify a desired state, assess what changes must be made to achieve that state and develop a plan to move forward. In the environment of a learning community, equity issues can and will be raised, and a process for improvement initiated and maintained.

This section provides a range of strategies and activities for assessing your organization with regard to equity, identifying any problems, developing a plan for improvement and engaging others in support of the plan. It also provides information about change and encourages the development of leaders for change.

Objectives

The objectives of this section are to:

- support schools, school divisions, educators, students and administrators in identifying needs, planning, and taking their own unique actions based on their individual needs and priorities;

- facilitate transformational changes to the culture and climate of educational communities through the development of plans for sustained personal and organizational commitment to fairness and justice;

    - foster individual commitment and capacity for leading change;

    - strengthen individual and organizational understanding of change processes; and,

    - encourage broadened support and involvement (including trustees, parents and students) in plans and shared responsibility for equity.

Broad Strategies for Change

The following strategies are described in the policy framework, *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future* (see pages 14-15). They are general processes for use throughout change initiatives:

- collaboration and partnerships;
- personal commitment;
- proactive leadership;
- community development;
- planning, evaluation and continual renewal; and,
- celebration of successes.

Activity 10 – Modelling Equity

Children and adolescents learn by watching and imitating the actions of people around them. This type of social learning has a more powerful influence on behaviour and attitudes than any amount of formal instruction. Teachers are strong role models for most children and the environment in the school shapes many aspects of children's behaviour. One of the best ways to promote equity is to model it in all elements of the classroom and school program.

With other representatives of your school or school division describe what each of the following would be like in a school that is modelling equity. Try to develop several descriptive points for each of the following components:

- teacher behaviour in the classroom;
- teacher behaviour in the halls and on the playground;
- resource materials and textbooks;
- curriculum that is taught in classrooms;
- relationship between the school and children's families;
- relationship between the school and the community as a whole;
- the physical environment in the school, (e.g., displays and bulletin boards, student work displayed, physical accessibility); and,
- composition of teaching and support staff.

Activity 11 – Where Are We?

Where are you? With other representatives of your school division or on your own, rate your school division on the following issues related to equity in education. Respond by writing a *yes, no* or *sometimes* on the line beside each question.

_____ Does your school division have effective mechanisms for ensuring that administrators support equity? Does it have staff for monitoring discriminatory practices?

_____ Does your school division ensure that parents and students from all cultural and socio-economic groups have meaningful participation in decision making?

_____ Does your school division address social issues such as employment, poverty, justice, housing and other matters as they relate to school and discrimination?

_____ Do the personnel practices of your school division ensure a representative workforce that reflects the composition of the community?

_____ Does your school division recognize, reward and support through resources (in the form of training, materials and feedback) those staff members who actively work toward increasing equity in the school and community?

_____ Does your school division promote and provide inservice for administrators and staff that deepens their understanding of anti-discriminatory practices? Privilege? Social justice?

_____ Does your school division have mechanisms in place so that administrators, staff, students, parents and other community members feel comfortable seeking assistance in dealing with discriminatory practices?

_____ Are school division-wide committees in place to review all instructional materials for bias?

_____ Do bulletin boards and hallway displays in school division offices and schools reflect the diversity of Saskatchewan's population?

_____ Would your school division penalize, overtly or covertly, a gay or lesbian teacher?

_____ Does your school division have an equity in education plan?

_____ If not, do you think it should have a comprehensive equity in education policy?

_____ Do you believe that an equity policy can be a vehicle for improvement and change?

_____ Do you think your community would have an interest in contributing to an equity in education plan?

_____ Does your board try to recruit teachers of Aboriginal ancestry? Teachers of other ethno-cultural backgrounds? Teachers with disabilities? Balanced numbers of male and female administrators?

_____ What are the benefits of recruiting teachers from these diverse groups?

_____ Do you believe that guidelines are required to improve the hiring and retention of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry? Teachers of other ethno-cultural backgrounds? Teachers with disabilities? Balanced numbers of male and female administrators?

_____ Do you think that guidelines on harassment issues of all kinds would be beneficial in your school division?

_____ Does your board have a Resource Selection and Challenge Policy that includes criteria regarding stereotypical content?

_____ Would you like to see human rights issues on your staff meeting agendas? On professional development and convention programs?

_____ Have you ever attended professional development or convention sessions that focus on human rights issues?

Activity 12 – Discrimination in Our Schools? Let's Consider

With the other representatives of your school division or on your own, write down four or five points to finish the following sentences.

When I see/hear/feel these things, I suspect that discrimination exists in our school:

When I **don't** see/hear/feel these things, I suspect that discrimination exists in our school:

(Adapted from Minors, A., Mukherjee, A., & Possen, G., 1995.)

Activity 13 – Equity Needs Assessment

This basic needs assessment will help you determine where you are and the type of plan that will help you get where you want to be in the future. With the other representatives of your school or division or on your own, conduct a mini needs assessment using the following statements and questions as a guide.

Equity is here to stay. What examples of equity are represented in your school?

Historically, inequity has divided us. What limitations and privileges are experienced by various segments of your school population?

Individual and public education, as well as personal commitment may be our most powerful tools for achieving equity in education. What efforts are currently underway for addressing equity in your school?

We must learn to achieve and sustain equity if we are to have social justice. How do students and staff perceive equity within your school?

Activity 14 – Where Do We Need to Go?

Based on your findings from Activity 13, work with other people from your school or division or on your own, to identify the *top five challenges* you see to equity in education in your school.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Activity 15 – Attitudes and Assumptions about Equity

Another way to determine where we need to go is to examine our attitudes and assumptions about equity. Identifying and understanding the numerous objections to equity in education can help in formulating a cohesive response when colleagues, students or parents show resistance to implementing equity in education. What follows are some objections that are commonly voiced and some suggested responses to anyone who might be skeptical of the program.

a. Objection:

"We have a number of different races and cultures in our school, but we really don't have the equity problems other schools have. Why try to *fix* something that is not broken?"

Suggested Responses:

- Prejudice and discrimination are so pervasive in our society that it is virtually impossible to find a school that never has any cross-cultural or gender problems.
- Some school administrators and faculty, like some families, are not fully aware of all that is really going on in the day-to-day interaction between students, parents and school staff.
- Underlying tensions often brew and fester for years before suddenly bursting out into the open.
- Fortunately such outbursts can often be prevented by proactive efforts to foster cross-cultural and gender relationships that provide learning opportunities and help relieve underlying tensions.

b. Objection:

"Our student body isn't really that diverse. Our population is mostly one culture, and we don't really have cross-cultural equity issues at our school."

Suggested Responses:

- When students do not recognize diversity they may not be prepared to make the transition successfully to an increasingly pluralistic workforce.
- In seemingly monocultural schools, other means may be used to explore diversity issues. You may simply have to define diversity more broadly.
- Helping students to explore diversity of any kind provides opportunities for students and staff to become acquainted, develop supportive relationships, work through difficulties and enjoy learning from each other.
- If your school lacks cultural diversity, then staff should spend even *more* time helping students learn about building positive relationships with people of different cultures.

c. Objection:

"We would like to deal with equity, but our community would not be supportive at this time. Right now, people are more upset about other issues, like our human sexuality curriculum – it's just not the right time to get into this."

Suggested Responses:

- Even though there are many competing issues to address, school personnel should not underestimate the critical topic of equity.
- Schools have too often been driven by crises.
- A problem severe enough to alarm the community should not erupt before a significant number of resources are allocated to address the issue.
- The topic of equity should be dealt with in grades K-12, with or without crises to motivate a school system to respond.

Your Reflections

Working on your own, consider the following objections and how you might respond to them. Record any thoughts you might have as you reflect on each scenario.

d. Objection:

"We had some *experts* come in and talk about equity with our faculty and it was disastrous. Instead of bringing unity, it seems to have opened up old wounds and created deeper divisions among the staff. We are not willing to deal with this any further and risk making matters worse than they already are."

Reflections:

e. Objection:

"We would like to get involved with equity in education, but what can we really do with this? So many of the problems originate in the home. We can teach and model sensitivity and tolerance, but if the family is not going to model equity at home, we're wasting our time."

Reflections:

f. Objection:

"We agree that equity in education is an important issue, but right now our school staff cannot afford to take away any time and money from their current priorities. We're having enough difficulty trying to get our students to meet academic standards without adding more expectations."

Reflections:

g. Objection:

"We would like to deal with equity in education, but we don't have the *experts* or the resources within our school or community to adequately deal with it. These are economically troubled times. Unless we receive a substantial grant for dealing with this issue, we cannot afford to approach it."

Reflections:

h. Objection:

"We already have an equity in education focus in our school. We encourage equal participation of all students and we expect all students to treat each other respectfully."

Reflections:

i. Objection:

"We are afraid of backlash. Parents and community members might complain if we focus on equity."

Reflections:

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Activity 16 – Understanding Change

Getting to where you want to be in the future involves a process of change. Change affects people in different ways. The following exercise will help you explore your own attitudes toward change.

a) My **understanding** of the change involved in creating an environment for equity in education is ...

b) My **attitude** toward the change involved in creating an environment for equity is ...

Three Reasons Why People Change – What Motivates You?

1. **It's the right thing to do.** – These people feel a moral imperative, seeing themselves as good people who want to do the right thing.
2. **It's best for my interests.** – These people are pragmatic and will change out of enlightened self-interest. They can see that class differences and discrimination are causing major social problems that impact on their lives, so they want to do something to improve things.
3. **I must; there's no choice.** – These people change because they are told they must. It is legislated. (Adapted from Lee, E., 1992.)

Working with others from your school, school division or on your own, finish the following sentences on dealing with change of this magnitude.

c) To create an environment for equity in education we need to ...

... keep doing

... do less of

... do more of

(Adapted from Saskatchewan Education, n.d.)

Activity 17 – Becoming Agents of Change

Achieving equity in education requires that each one of us becomes an agent of change – the process of getting from where we are now to where we want to be in the future. The process involves commitment and involvement of administrators, teachers, parents and students.

Discussion Questions

Working with the other representatives from your school, school division or on your own, discuss the following questions for a few minutes:

1. Why do you think some people do not like to become involved in helping bring about change?

2. How much time and energy are you willing to commit to working on creating an equitable environment?

3. What kinds of outside support and available resources do you have to help you with equity in education?

Based on your discussion of the above questions, begin development of a realistic plan for each of the change agents on the worksheets that follow.

Change Agent: Administrators/Trustees

Things To Do	By Whom	By When

Change Agent: Teachers

Things To Do	By Whom	By When

Change Agent: Parents

Things To Do	By Whom	By When

Change Agent: Students

Things To Do	By Whom	By When

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Information to assist in developing an equity plan and a sample equity in education plan are included in Appendix 2.

Activity 18 – Getting Others On Board

The DOs of Obtaining Support for Creating an Equitable Environment

Working with others from your school, school division or on your own, check the following list of DOs as they apply to or as they are achieved in your classroom, school or school division.

____ Develop a clear and organized equity in education plan. (See Appendix 2.)

____ Conduct a basic needs assessment of staff and students on equity in education issues. (See Activity 13, page 34.)

____ Obtain appropriate administrative support. This might involve preparing a brief and clear presentation or proposal for your principal and/or assistant principal.

____ Conduct a brief presentation about this program for your school staff. Encourage staff to talk about and practise equity.

____ Provide professional development and inservice on equity in education.

____ Enlist the support and solicit the input of a range of parents and community leaders on how to effectively address equity in education.

____ Be persistent, even if some people in your school and/or community are hesitant to support your efforts toward equity in education.

____ Publicly recognize efforts by students and staff throughout the school who promote equity in education.

____ Develop a school committee that will meet regularly to coordinate efforts in strengthening equity in education.

____ In soliciting students' support for equity in education, let them know that you will welcome their honest, open thoughts about the issues presented.

____ Design a follow-through plan for dealing with objections and related concerns.

The DON'Ts of Obtaining Support for Creating an Equitable Environment.

Working with other representatives from your school, school division or on your own, review the following list of DON'Ts.

____ Don't assume that working toward equity in education will be problem-free.

____ Don't focus entirely on one aspect of equity, e.g., cultural ancestry. A balance of all aspects of equity is important.

____ Don't take a "one-shot" approach, e.g., a one-day presentation to staff or students with no continuance or review.

____ Don't let fear of extremist groups or prejudiced community members convince you not to deal with equity in education. Instilling fear in others is these groups' most powerful weapon.

____ Don't demand that every staff member become equally involved. Different people are at different levels of awareness and comfort on the issue of equity in education.

____ Don't put off skeptical parents by asking them to fill out permission forms or personal questionnaires. Simply inform them that your school believes in and promotes equity in education.

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Most important, don't give up! Start small. Once you start making headway with equity in education, others will see the benefits of your effort.

III. Assessing Progress – How Will We Know When We Have Achieved Our Objectives?

- *How do we measure equitable practices in our classrooms, school or school division?*
- *How can we determine if our classroom, school or school division is becoming more equitable over time?*
- *What data do we need to collect to measure equity?*
- *Is it possible to set concrete, achievable equity goals?*
- *How can we determine if we have met our equity goals?*
- *What are our strengths and weaknesses in regard to equity?*
- *What can we do to make our classrooms and our schools more equitable?*

Information for Facilitators

Answering questions such as those listed above will help schools and school divisions gather the information needed to determine how well their equity plans are working and to make improvements to them. Answering these questions will also assist schools and school divisions in gathering information needed to determine how well they are progressing toward achieving an equitable environment for all.

Education indicators provide information and measures to describe a system's performance in achieving desired conditions and results. A number of indicators are used together. Like pieces of a puzzle, they have less meaning individually. However, when combined with others they create a picture that can provide valuable information to inform decision making and provide parents and the public at large with a comprehensive understanding of the quality and performance of equity in education.

Indicators

There are three types of education equity indicators that contribute to providing a comprehensive picture:

1. **Contextual Indicators –** describe the social, economic and demographic influences on education and equity and help us to understand the issue in a larger context (e.g., population composition, economic conditions, attitudes toward equity).

2. **Process Indicators –** relate specifically to the education system and describe how things are done, including policies, resources and activities (e.g., the extent to which resources are gender equitable and reflect Aboriginal content and perspectives).

3. **Outcome Indicators –** provide information about performance results (e.g., student marks, student retention and graduation rates, reduction in incidents of discrimination).

Education equity indicators can be either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative indicators provide numbers and statistics, for example, students' scores on a particular exam. Qualitative indicators provide narrative information, for example, teachers' comments about the satisfaction and challenges associated with inclusive education or the implementation of a new curriculum.

Indicators can be collected on many dimensions of the educational program and environment, including:

- curriculum;
- resource materials;
- school environment;
- hiring and professional development;
- student achievement;
- instructional practices;
- student assessment and evaluation practices; and,
- school and community relationships.

Activity 19 – Possible Equity Indicators

Below are some indicators that can assist you in measuring the progress of your actions toward equity. You will want to develop additional ones unique to your own priorities and circumstances.

- Decreased harassment of students.
- Increased numbers of Aboriginal teachers.
- Increased numbers of Aboriginal students graduating (Goal: graduating grade 12 classes with the same composition as kindergarten/grade 1 classes).
- Increased numbers of students from "disadvantaged" groups continuing on to post-secondary studies.
- More students entering areas that are non-traditional for their gender.
- Balanced numbers of males and females in administrative positions at the school, division and regional levels.
- Development and implementation of curricula that reflect the lives of Saskatchewan's diverse student population, and are culturally relevant for Aboriginal peoples, females, males, etc.
- Additional supports, both human and technological, for students with exceptional needs.

Discussion Question

1. What information can we gather in our school division/school to determine if our equity in education plan is working?

IV. Appendices

Appendix 1 – **Cultural Bridges Projects**

Appendix 2 – **Equity in Education Policies and Plans**

a) Developing an Equity Policy and an Equity Plan

b) Sample Equity in Education Plan

Appendix 3 – **Resources from the STF Resource Centre**

Appendix 4 – **References**

Appendix 1 – Cultural Bridges Projects

78 Cultural Bridges Projects

Beginning Cultural Bridges Student Projects

1. When writing reports or working on projects, choose cross-cultural themes.

2. Form discussion groups to share perspectives on cultural issues.

3. Develop a list of, or biography of, sports players, artists, or writers representing people of different cultures, and ethnicities.

4. Invite people of different cultures into the school to talk about their heritage, childhood, or other experiences in their lives related to culture.

5. Create Cultural Bridges posters and bulletin boards for the school.

6. Create multicultural collages full of people and/or symbols of different cultures.

7. Invite community professionals of different cultures to make presentations about their careers.

8. Interview people from another culture and develop a vocabulary list from that culture.

9. Identify favourite parts from movies, TV shows, plays, or stories that have a multicultural theme.

10. Play out characters being studied in history classes.

11. Develop a Reading Section in your classroom of multicultural books and materials.

12. Interview an elderly person of another culture about his or her life.

13. Interview an adult or peer of a different culture.

14. Interview parents or grandparents to learn about one's own culture.

15. Interview another student who is of a different culture and write a paper about his or her experiences.

16. Have a school dance with a unity theme.

17. Develop reports on how different cultures relate to different animals and pets.

18. Hold an Inter-cultural Dinner and invite people to bring ethnic foods.

19. Have a pen pal who is of a different culture.

Other (to be developed with diverse teams of students)

20. Organize a fun event for neighborhood kids.

21. Run a canned food drive.

22. Send letters and cards to someone in a nursing home.

23. Organize a sports equipment exchange.

24. Volunteer at a soup kitchen.

25. Organize a clothing drive.

26. Run a small job squad to assist neighborhood people with errands, yardwork, etc.

Intermediate Cultural Bridges Projects

27. Have a Student Weekend Exchange with a person of a different culture. Go to each other's home for an afternoon, evening, dinner, or weekend.

28. Organize a Cultural Bridges club at school.

29. Develop a multicultural planning team with students, teachers, and administrators to plan activities for the school.

30. Develop articles on multicultural issues for the school newspaper.

31. Start multicultural study groups.

32. Select students and/or staff members to develop a Cultural Bridges Pep Rally for the school. Include skits, music and rap songs, and cheers.

33. Invite a teacher or artist from a different culture to make a presentation in classes and/or in an assembly program.

34. Develop or enhance a student Peer Helper Program that includes Cultural Bridges training and projects.

35. Sponsor a student-run cross-cultural dinner and benefit concert for parents and donate the money to a good cause.

36. Work together in small groups to develop stories with multicultural themes that can be acted out in the classroom.

37. Choose a fellow student of a different culture to seek out for friendship.

38. Visit an elderly person of a different culture on a regular basis.

39. Read to or run errands for a senior citizen of a different culture.

40. Clean up the home or yard of an older person or family, in particular one of a different culture.

41. Adopt a Little Brother/Sister of a different culture.

42. Develop a Cultural Bridges Pen Pal program.

43. Students who are peer helpers/peer tutors can work primarily with students of different cultures in their homes.

44. Create a puppet show on Building Cultural Bridges for children.

45. Hold a 24-Hour Relay Challenge with maximum diversity within each team. (24-Hour Relay Challenge video, Community Matters, 3160 16th Street, Sacramento, CA 95818, 916-442-5018).

46. Start a Friday Learn-a-Language Day in which students learn expressions from different languages, perhaps through community volunteers.

47. Peer helpers/tutors can assist other students.

Other (to be developed with diverse teams of students)

48. Organize a schoolwide swap.

49. Run a recycling drive at school.

50. Volunteer to orient new students to the school.

51. Volunteer to assist students with disabilities at lunchtime.

52. For older students, organize a Field Day for younger students. (Note: Plan activities to include children with special needs).

53. Read to younger children. (Note: Encourage at-risk students to be readers).

54. Teach environmental awareness to younger students.

55. Prepare a talk about avoiding drugs.

56. Volunteer at a children's hospital.

57. Be a part of an awareness program to prevent alcohol and drug abuse (e.g., SADD).

Advanced Cultural Bridges Projects

58. Peer-tutor English as a second language.

59. Organize a one-day conference for students using a theme of racial/cultural unity.

60. Develop a questionnaire of racial/cultural attitudes to administer to other students at your school.
    - Analyze results and make recommendations.
    - Organize dialogue groups.
    - Use peer mediators to sit in on dialogue groups at school to discuss controversial issues.

61. Establish a Peer Mediation Program that includes Cultural Bridges training and projects at your school.

62. Develop ongoing student exchange programs.

63. Develop student mentoring programs with:
    - Paired mentors of two different cultures for each student.
    - Students organizing parents to help mentor cross-culturally.

64. Develop district- or school-wide student-led forums on equity issues.

65. Make a video on multicultural relations.

66. Conduct Cultural Bridges activities with other students.

67. Put on a school-wide assembly about multicultural issues.

68. Work to beautify a city/town block or rural area with members of that community.

69. Volunteer to participate in a program in which there is an identified need (e.g., immigrant settlement, Meals on Wheels, Food Bank, etc.).

70. High school students can work with middle and upper elementary students on racial or cultural issues and activities.

71. Develop a workshop, series of discussions, or forum dealing with youth issues.

72. Develop multicultural skits and plays and present them to students in other classes or schools.

73. Develop cross-cultural presentations for community service organizations such as Lions, Kiwanis, and Kinsmen.

74. Organize a student peer-orientation program to welcome new students.

75. Organize cross-cultural family interactions (e.g., Adopt-A-Family).

Other (to be developed with diverse teams of students)

76. Develop a Phone Friend Program for students who are without parental supervision after school.

77. Become a Big Brother or Big Sister.

78. Work as a phone hotline helper.

(Adapted from *Building Cultural Bridges*, copyright 1997 by the National Educational Service, 1252 Loesch Road, Bloomington, IN 47404, www.nesonline.com.)

Appendix 2 – Equity in Education Policies and Plans

a) Developing an Equity Policy and an Equity Plan

Equity policies and plans are developed to provide direction for solving equity issues and ensuring equitable practices in our schools. They are designed to remove barriers to equity by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices.

The specific purposes of equity policies are to:

- legitimate, clarify and reaffirm existing effective practice;
- focus attention on existing issues or problems;
- remedy the effects of past discrimination; and,
- communicate to a community the direction for change a school board will be taking to achieve equity, including how the board and individual schools will respond to all acts of discrimination.

What is an Equity Policy?

An equity policy is a statement of philosophy and belief as well as a direction for action. It signals that a board recognizes that inequities conflict with the goal of ensuring fair and equal treatment and benefit for all students. Equity policies typically include:

- a background section containing relevant existing policy and legal declarations such as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*; and,
- a section containing the philosophy, beliefs, goals and objectives. This provides the context for the equity in education action plan.

What is an Equity Plan?

An equity plan is based on the equity policy and typically includes statements of responsibility, regulations and procedures, guidelines and activities to address each aspect of the scope stated in the policy. A comprehensive equity plan will include sections on these areas:

- employment;
- curriculum and instructional materials;
- assessment and instructional practices;
- cross-cultural, inter-cultural and anti-racist education;
- information on harassment and discrimination;
- school environment;
- student leadership development;
- the school and the community; and,
- monitoring.

Equity policies and plans are best developed in close collaboration with all members of the education community, including parents and other community members, as well as students, teachers, administrators and trustees.

A sample Equity in Education Plan appears on page 60. This policy addresses several types of equity. Some school divisions may choose to develop an equity plan that is more general and does not identify the various types of equity. Other school divisions may choose to have several policies each addressing a specific type of equity.

(Adapted from Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1992.)

Guidelines for Developing Equity Policy and Plans

1. Identify the need and develop a rationale. This involves a candid identification of specific discriminatory practices or barriers to equity within the division.

2. Identify who should be involved in the development process. Include people from across the community encouraging "bottom-up" processes.

3. Consult with other divisions and locations that have developed policies; research causes of issues in your area; identify possible solutions to those issues.

4. Begin the process of personal and organizational change to create a climate and process for change based on the needs, priorities and resources of your community. (See suggestions throughout this handbook.)

5. Through consensus, establish principles, set goals and objectives and develop an action plan. The action plan should be "do-able".

6. Ensure that supports are in place to implement the plan and to nurture the long-term commitment of individuals to make the necessary personal and organizational changes.

7. Continually review and renew your policy and plan. Involve students and community members. Monitoring and evaluating your plan and the success of individual actions will provide the necessary direction for future steps.

(Adapted from Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1992.)

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(Adapted from Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1992.)

b) Sample Equity in Education Plan

The _____ Board of Education

It is the policy of the _____ Board of Education to ensure everyone's right to equal concern and respect, and provide an environment that promotes and fosters growth, harmony, and equality of opportunity and benefit for all pupils and staff members regardless of colour, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, sex, disability, ability, marital or family status, religion, creed, sexual orientation or receipt of public assistance.

Responsibilities:

1. It is the responsibility of trustees to ensure systematic implementation of the policy with supports and resources.

2. It is the responsibility of the director of education to provide leadership, monitor implementation and review of the policy, and provide feedback, and recognition for successful actions.

3. It is the responsibility of principals to maintain a school and working environment that enhances the policy and is supportive and protective of students and staff.

4. It is the responsibility of school staff to ensure that any and all differences are recognized as significant means of enriching and strengthening the learning experience.

5. It is the responsibility of all students to participate individually and collectively in ways that show an understanding of the beliefs and goals of the policy.

Regulations:

1. Employment Equity
   - Hiring, evaluation, and promotion practices will reflect the principles of employment equity.

2. Curriculum and Instructional Materials
   - The curriculum will make provision for students to acquire an understanding of human rights and social justice and the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to deal constructively with discrimination encountered in daily life experiences.
   - Selection of texts and materials will ensure that the contents reflect the diversity of the community and recognize positive elements of cultures and other differences.

- Guidelines will be provided for use with literature containing known bias to provide historical and social perspective.

3. Instructional and Assessment Practices
   - All students will have equal opportunity to develop their individual abilities and interests and will be provided with appropriate programs.
   - All instruments employed for assessment, testing, interviewing and counselling shall be selected, administered and interpreted in such a way that they are valid indicators, as far as possible, of each student's ability and/or achievement.
   - Staff members will base expectations of students, and both formal and informal evaluation procedures, on observed growth and verifiable achievements. Staff members will guard against basing expectations for achievement on prejudices and stereotypes.

4. Cross-cultural, Inter-cultural, and Anti-racism Education
   - All school division employees will be given opportunities to gain information about racial, religious, and ethnocultural equity issues with applications appropriate to the curriculum and the school system.
   - The formal and informal curriculum will reflect the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of Saskatchewan students.

5. Harassment and Discrimination
   - Inservice training will be provided to assist all staff and student councils to become familiar with the protocol and guidelines for dealing with incidents of discrimination and to assist them in identifying, responding to, and preventing such incidents.
   - The Board will refuse to admit to its property any person, group or association who by intent or action advocates or espouses discrimination in any form.

6. School Environment
   - The school calendar, celebrations, food service, athletics, assemblies, concerts, announcements, bulletin boards, hallway displays, libraries, guidance offices and media centres will reflect Saskatchewan's diverse population.

- School activities, special program days, food services, and promotional schemes in the school will be examined to ensure that these do not prevent the participation of students because of ethnocultural or religious beliefs, and, as well, reflect the diversity of students in the province.

7. Student Development
   - All students will be given the opportunity to:
     (a) Develop and maintain confidence and a sense of self worth;
     (b) Gain the knowledge and acquire the attitudes necessary for active and full participation in Canadian society and in an increasingly independent world;
     (c) Develop positive attitudes and an understanding of differences in religions, cultures, genders, disabilities, sexual orientation, and abilities;
     (d) Gain an appreciation for their own cultural backgrounds as well as for the cultural backgrounds of others; and,
     (e) Develop their potential and aspirations without limitations imposed by stereotyping or discrimination.

8. The School and the Community
   - Harmony between the school system and the community will be promoted.
   - When communicating to parents and guardians its plans for dealing with the behaviour of pupils and staff, each school will include statements relating to the handling of incidents involving discrimination. Such statements will include information advising parents and guardians of ways to communicate concerns to the school and central office administrators.
   - Communication will be encouraged with other school boards, community groups or associations, and government agencies that offer consultation or assistance in strengthening the school system's approach to equity issues.

9. Monitoring
   - Implementation of the equity in education policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis, feedback will be provided and successful actions recognized.
   - The formal and informal curricula will be monitored to ensure they are administered in an unbiased manner.
   - Employment practices will be monitored on a regular basis and will be a matter of public record.

10. Leadership Development, Organizational Change and Development
    - Staff members will be encouraged to seek opportunities to enhance their professional growth in the fields of multiculturalism, cultural relations, gender equity, and working with people of varying abilities and lifestyles.
    - Inservice sessions to promote gender equity and to enhance sensitivity and competence in working with people from diverse backgrounds or varying abilities will be an integral part of staff development for all board employees.

(Adapted from Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1992; Wellington County Board of Education, n.d.; Regina Public School Division, n.d.)

Appendix 3 – Resources from the STF Resource Centre

The following bibliographies have been compiled by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation's Stewart Resource Centre. The bibliographies contain numerous references according to specific topic areas.

Stewart Resource Centre
Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
2317 Arlington Avenue
SASKATOON, SK
S7J 2H8

(306) 373-1660
Toll-free 1-800-667-7762
www.stf.sk.ca

- *Diversity, Gender Equity: A Bibliography* (July 2000)
- *Diversity, Inclusive Education: A Bibliography* (July 2000)
- *Diversity, In the Classroom: A Bibliography* (July 2000)
- *Diversity, Multicultural Education: A Bibliography* (July 2000)
- *Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Bibliography* (July 2000)
- *Diversity, Aboriginal Education Issues: A Bibliography* (December 1999)

Appendix 4 – References

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